



John L. Salomone  
Town Manager

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

**MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT**

## **MINUTES (as amended)**

### **CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION April 10, 2008**

#### **I CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Bafundo called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

#### **II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

#### **III ROLL CALL**

##### Commissioners Present (roll call)

Nancy Bafundo, Chair  
Tony Boni  
Peter Boorman  
Robert Briggaman  
Alan Nafis

##### Staff Present

Marian Amodeo, Library Director  
Dianne Stone, Director of Senior and Disabled Center Services

#### **IV PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Elaine Boland, 235 Boylston Street: Mrs. Boland asked whether there is a three-minute time limit for public participation. The Commissioners answered in the negative. Mrs. Boland stated that she has three suggestions for the Commission:

1. Delete the title of Director of Public Safety from the realm of the Town Manager's job explanation in the Charter - Mrs. Boland stated that the title has enabled a previous Town Manager to retire under the Police Department's retirement plan rather than the Town's administrative retirement plan. She stated that this has unfairly increased the costs to the Town's taxpayers and she stated that she is sure that the current Town Manager would never think to take such advantage of the Town's finances. Mrs. Boland stated that it would be prudent to correct this situation now so that it can never be misconstrued in the future. She stated that she does not know the exact dollar amount of the cost increase but stated that she does know that the Police contract was always a better contract than the administrative contract for retirement.
2. Stay away from budget referendums – Mrs. Boland stated that she has thoroughly investigated the topic of budget referendum over the years and has spoken to many professionals in various towns that have referendums. She stated that most of these towns have had to go to referendum more than once and often have had to repeat the process four or five times per year. She stated that the cost per referendum is approximately \$3000-\$5000 and that hiring poll workers for each referendum is expensive and very difficult. She stated that the cost is based on keeping only one

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polling district open for each budget referendum. She stated that the current administration feels that budget referendums equate to the public's interest in the Town's budget, but stated that this is not so as very few people have attended budget meetings and public hearings during this budget process. She stated that she has not seen any increased public interest in the budget process despite the fact that the Town might be going to budget referendum. Mrs. Boland stated that the nine Councilors represent 30,000 voters in the Town and the voters have given the Council the power and respect to do their duty. She urged the administration not to think that budget referendum is a more open process and stated that a referendum is a more cumbersome and costly process.

3. Do not limit the public to three minutes of speaking time during *Council meetings* (? sic). Mrs. Boland stated that she would agree with the time limit if there were a dozen or more speakers, however it would be more in keeping with open government to allot speaking time based on a sliding scale, for example, if less than five people sign up to speak, allow more time and if six or more sign up allow less time, etc. She stated that this would be fair to those who do take the time and effort to come out to all of the meetings.

Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive: Mrs. Klett stated that she agrees with former Mayor Reynolds's idea that in the event that the Commission should decide to go for budget referendum the vote to approve the changes to the Charter in regards to referendum should be set separately from the housekeeping items to be changed in the Charter. Mrs. Klett read selections from an article regarding budget referendum written by Jason Vallee of the Record Journal dated March 29, 2008: "During the 2007 budget deliberations in Plainville, the public voted down a budget proposal three times despite the fact that the Town Council had presented a zero increase. When asked what changes could be made, those who saw tax increases as a result of revaluation simply replied 'our taxes are too high'....According to CCM's statistics, the average town has about a 10 percent voter turnout for referendum. Even in controversial years, Lee said he has never seen nor heard of a turnout higher than 25 percent....For Regional School District 5, known as the Amity school district, this problem had severe negative consequences when in 2002, it took nine votes to get a budget passed. At that point, the schools in those towns - Bethany, Woodbridge and Orange - had already been operating without an official budget for more than a year. The results were devastating, as the district was forced to cut funding to nearly all of the extracurricular programming and even some programs within the curriculum while it awaited approval....In fact, Moise said he worries that if a referendum were included in Southington's process, it would only polarize different groups within the community, particularly between parents of schoolchildren and non-parents....73 of the state's 169 towns and cities now use public vote to pass the budget...." Mrs. Klett stated that according to 2008 CCM information, of the 73 municipalities that held budget referendums in a recent year only 45 budgets were approved on the first vote. Mrs. Klett stated that the report also found that 17 municipalities adopted their budgets after the start of the fiscal year, compared to 12 in 2006 and 14 in 2005. She stated that the report identified that when State aid goes down property taxes go up. Mrs. Klett noted Commissioner Boorman's concern about what would happen if State mandates were to affect the budget. She commented that grant money has decreased - in 2001-2002 Town road aid was 35 million and in 2007-2008 Town road aid was 30 million, Pilot State property grant money has gone from \$41 million to 53 million and the Pequot Mohegan grant has gone from 135 million to 93 million. Mrs. Klett stated that the report shows that the property tax cap could have a negative impact on municipal bond ratings. She stated that Moody's Investor Services recently issued a document concerning New Jersey's new property tax reform which stated, in part: "The cap will increase fiscal pressure on municipalities with larger reliance on property tax revenues and further reduce financial flexibility of municipalities already faced with an existing cap on expenditure growth. Moody's expects many communities will budget use of more fund balance...." (Mrs. Klett noted that Newington did so in the amount of \$2,000,000 in its recently passed budget)....budgets may be prepared in a less conservative manner than in the past with some municipalities assuming a higher rate of tax collection than they have before, again leading to less opportunity to replenish any fund balance. Overall, Moody expects the property tax reform act to reduce municipal financial flexibility and create challenges for the municipalities' efforts to balance their funds." Mrs. Klett stated that there is much more information in the CCM report and the Record Journal article, both of which are available online.

## **V MINUTES**

### **A Regular Meeting, 3/13/08**

The Commissioners noted the following amendments to be made to the minutes of the March 13, 2008 regular meeting:

- Commissioner Nafis: page 3, third bullet from the bottom should read "Town Clerk" rather than "Town Planner" (so noted)
- Commissioner Briggaman: Page 5, fourth paragraph, sixth sentence should read "he has not reached" (so noted)

Commissioner Boni moved to accept the minutes of the March 13, 2008 regular meeting as amended. Motion seconded by Commissioner Nafis. Motion passed 5-0.

### **B Regular Meeting, 3/27/08**

Commissioner Boorman stated that he would like to review the tape for clarification of a discussion listed on page eight of the March 27, 2007 minutes.

The Commissioners noted the following amendments to be made to the minutes of the March 27, 2008 regular meeting:

- Commissioner Boorman: page 10, written communications from the public, six lines down: The minutes state, "Legal counsel was not present at the meeting." Legal counsel was present at the meeting but was out of the room at the time of the request. (so noted)
- Commissioner Boorman: page 12, three sentences above adjournment, "for their word" should read "at their word". (so noted)
- Commissioner Boorman: the public participation speaker's name that was not audible on the tape, Mike, is the NCTV volunteer and that his name can be obtained after the meeting. (so noted)
- Commissioner Briggaman: page 7, first paragraph, seven lines down: "is indication" should read "an indication" (so noted)

The Commissioners agreed to table the approval of the March 27, 2008 meeting pending the review of the tapes in regards to Commissioner Boorman's concern.

## **VI MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED**

(Note – the order of the topics in this section varied from the agenda in order to accommodate speaker availability)

### **A Dianne Stone, Director, Senior and Disabled Center Services**

Ms. Stone stated that other than in its very existence the Department of Senior and Disabled Center Services is not affected too much by the Charter. She commented on Charter sections that relate to her work:

- Section 608 – Commission on Aging and Disabled: no comment
- Section 706 – Department of Senior and Disabled Center Services: This section states that the Director shall be responsible for the overall administration of the Joseph P. Doyle Community Complex and the programs, services and staff provided by the Department of Senior and Disabled Center Services. It may not be a good idea to tie the Department to a specific building as is indicated in the current language. In addition, *given a recent transition, facility management is not the responsibility of the Public Works. The director of this department is not responsible for the administration of that facility to some degree.* The language in section 705, Department of Human Services, contains language which states that the Director has such powers and duties as the Council may prescribe and as confirmed by Connecticut Statute; such language could be added into the Department of Senior and Disabled Center Services because the current language

does not appear to give the Council the authority to appoint any other kind of duties to the Department of Senior and Disabled Center Services or to the Director of that Department.

- Section 613(C) – Terms of Office for Boards and Commissions: The section states that no person shall serve more than two consecutive terms as chairperson of any appointed board, commission or similar body. This is not always possible and the language is not always followed by certain commissions.

Commissioner Briggaman commented that not tying the Department to a particular building has been addressed by a number of different speakers and that the point is well taken. Commissioner Bafundo asked Ms. Stone whether she feels that there is anything else that the Charter should address. Ms. Stone replied in the negative, explaining that most of the Department runs according to ordinance rather than by the Charter.

## B Current Town Council Members

### Councilor Bottalico

Councilor Bottalico gave his input and concerns regarding the Charter:

- Fire Chief/Fire Marshall: The positions of Fire Chief and Fire Marshall are currently held by the same person. One person should not be allowed to hold both jobs because the Fire Marshall is a salaried job for the Town and the Fire Chief is a volunteer. There is a conflict of interest in that particular situation.
- School buildings: Now that there is a Facilities Manager, all buildings including school buildings should come under the management of that person. The Town Attorney has not found any State Statutes that would limit the Town from doing so.

Commissioner Boorman asked for Councilor Bottalico's input relative to the pros and cons of the Fire Commission. Councilor Bottalico stated that he has not heard any input regarding the situation. Commissioner Boorman asked whether Councilor Bottalico had heard anything from the grass-roots volunteer level about the situation. Councilor Bottalico replied that he had not spoken to any firefighters on the issue.

Commissioner Boorman asked regarding the school buildings issue whether Councilor Bottalico is suggesting that the Town should be in charge of the maintenance and upkeep of the school facilities. Councilor Bottalico replied in the affirmative and explained that the Town has a Facilities Manager and using the Facilities Manager at the schools would take some of the burden off of the Board of Education so that the Board can concentrate on the school curriculum. Commissioner Boorman asked whether Councilor Bottalico had received any input from the Board of Education on that idea. Councilor Bottalico replied that some of the Board members have shown interest in the idea.

Commissioner Nafis asked for an explanation of the conflict between having the same person serve as both the Fire Chief and Fire Marshall. Councilor Bottalico replied that the problem is that the Fire Marshall is a paid Town employee but the Fire Chief is a volunteer position. He stated that if the Chief is at a fire for several hours, someone will have to cover for him. Councilor Bottalico additionally stated that there are currently five Fire Marshals – that's quite a few. He stated that one person cannot cover both jobs and if the Fire Marshal is getting paid by the Town then that should be his job. Commissioner Nafis stated that there are times when the Fire Marshall and the Fire Chief are doing the same thing. He stated that he does not understand the situation. Councilor Bottalico replied that he does not have the answer.

### Councilor Cohen

Councilor Cohen noted that the previously mentioned former Town Manager who retired with the Police pension plan had done so in lieu of an increase in salary. She gave her input and concerns regarding the Charter:

- Section 202(A) – The section states that the Board of Education shall have the power to appoint and remove non-professional employees. Councilor Cohen stated that she does not know who would be considered non-professional workers. Commissioner Bafundo replied that non-teachers may be considered non-professional workers. Councilor Cohen questioned whether the actual Board has control over hiring and firing of the non-professional workers. Commissioner Boorman stated that the Board, through the Superintendent, hires bus drivers, custodians, etc. Councilor

Cohen stated that the language reading “appoint and remove” is not clear. She noted that *the Town Council does not have the authority to appoint or remove administrators*. Commissioner Boorman commented that it is an interesting point which should be discussed during the Commission’s meeting with the Board of Education.

- Section 302 – The section states that the Mayor is the official head of the Town for ceremonial and military purposes. During the last Charter revision no one really knew the meaning of the military purposes, so the language was left in the Charter. If it does not mean anything it should be removed and if it means something the Town should understand what it means.
- Section 303(A)(2) – When the Town voted to go to the new health system it was done by resolution so that the Town would have the option to change it if it didn’t work out. The Charter wording should be done in such a way that the Town is not tied into the Health District in case it does not work out.
- Section 404 – The second paragraph is about non-voting Council work sessions. If it is left in the Charter, the language should be added that votes can be taken to adjourn and to go into executive session. Commissioner Boorman noted that Councilor Cohen has served on Councils that have used work sessions. He stated that although the last Council moved away from work sessions, he asked whether Councilor Cohen could foresee that future Councils might want to use work sessions. Councilor Cohen stated that future Councils might want to do so, but they could put that in their own rules. Commissioner Bafundo asked if work sessions can be held if they are not noted in the Charter. Councilor Cohen replied that *they could make their own rules, and put in rules that add work sessions*. Commissioner Boorman stated that it would not hurt to leave the language in the Charter.
- Section 407/408 – Referendums for ordinance: Special appropriations should be part of the title. (more discussion on these sections below)
- Section 410 – 2<sup>nd</sup> line, bottom of the page, add a comma so that the language reads: “Electors shall have the right to petition for a referendum in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes on any ordinance passed by the Council (add comma here) except an emergency ordinance.
- ~~Section 411/Section 412~~ **Section 410/Section 411** - When an ordinance is passed, there is a fifteen day period before the ordinance becomes effective in order to give residents the time to petition on an ordinance. ~~Section 412~~ **410** addresses the right of referendum on ordinances and states that *in the event that the public decides that the ordinance should pass then it becomes effective immediately*. Section 411 is for when there is initiative on an ordinance. It does not say that the Town does not need the fifteen days. It should state *“It shall take effect immediately following the referendum.”*
- Section 603 – Library Director. There is a difference between the Library Director and the Library Board of Directors. The last part of the section should read *“with the concurrence of the majority of the full twelve-member Board of Directors.”* The Charter does not mention what the full Board is. The minutes of the 1990 Charter Meeting state that the three officers are also members of the Board of Directors in addition to the twelve other members. It is not clear whether the concurrence with the majority is for the twelve members only or all fifteen members. Ms. Amodeo, Library Director, noted that the Board should be known as the Library Board of Trustees. She stated that technically it is a fifteen-member board, only six of whom are political appointments which is why only six are addressed in the Charter and the others are addressed in the Library’s Charter. She stated that it is a gray area. Councilor Cohen stated that it is misleading as to what the full Board is and whether it is twelve or fifteen; there should be a number put into the language. Commissioner Boorman stated that there may be a situation in which the number of Board members increases or decreases. He stated that the Charter language reads “concurrence of the majority of the full Board of Directors”. He stated that the full Board of Directors would be the fifteen members regardless of whether or not the three officers participate on a regular basis. Councilor Cohen replied that this section refers only to the Town’s six members. Commissioner Boorman stated that the way of knowing this is that the language states “the majority of the full Board of Directors”. Councilor Cohen replied that the full Board could only be six members. Commissioner Nafis stated that Councilor Cohen is asking for a definition of the number of members on the Board rather than just the six people appointed by the Town. He asked whether the term “Board of Directors” should be changed to “Board of Trustees”. Ms. Amodeo stated that she will check the Library’s Charter.

- Section 614 – Consultant Services – Councilor Cohen stated that she is not sure why this section, which states “The Council may retain such technical and professional consultant services as it shall deem necessary to obtain expert opinion and recommendation. This action shall be by ordinance.” needs to be by ordinance. Commissioner Boorman stated that there was perhaps a Town Attorney opinion at the time that would have prompted something along those lines, but that it is strange that it is an ordinance requirement.
- Section 804 – There have been different opinions as to whether the Town Manager should have much of a say in the Board of Education’s budget, whether the Town Manager is allowed just a pass-through or actually has input. Until recently, the Town Manager has had input. Councilor Cohen stated opinion that the Town Manager should have more of an authority to cut the Board’s budget, especially with a barebones budget. The Council has the authority to change the budget anyway.
- Section 407/408 – The Council has the authority to borrow by issuing bonds or notes when it is in anticipation of receipt of taxes, or if the notes are less than \$125,000. No public hearing is required under these circumstances, only a Council resolution is required. In the event of emergencies or special assessments the Council has the authorization to borrow by issuing bonds or notes and paying for it with a special appropriation and is exempt from mandating a referendum. A referendum can be held, but it is not mandated and there is no dollar restriction in the Charter for an emergency situation. It takes six Council votes to approve the spending. A special appropriation is defined in Charter section 807 as an item not in the budget, paid for out of non-appropriated funds. Under \$125,000 requires just a Council resolution; \$125,001 - \$325,000 requires an ordinance and \$325,001 and up requires a referendum. This is not part of the budget; the budget has no limit and there are no restrictions in the Charter as to the amount that can be put into the budget. This particular section deals with special appropriations.

#### Councilor Nasinnyk

Councilor Nasinnyk commented that she has attended the Charter Commission meetings as an audience member on a regular basis and stated that she hopes that the Commission will afford her the opportunity to come forward in the future when she has something to say. Councilor Nasinnyk stated that it has been an interesting and educational process and she complimented the Commission on its work. She stated that she will speak further when and if anything comes up. She also thanked Councilor Cohen for her presentation.

#### **C Time Limit – Public Participation**

Commissioner Boni remarked that there is a three minute time limit for public participation at Town Council meetings and a two minute time limit for public participation at TPZ meetings. He stated that three minutes is adequate and noted in his experience that when a speaker nears the three minute limit the Mayor will ask the speaker to summarize and finish his or her comments. He stated that there should be a time limit established for the record but it can be somewhat lax and at the discretion of the Chair, and recommended that the Commission institute a three minute time limit. Commissioner Briggaman noted a motion made for a three minute time limit during the last meeting and concurred with Commissioner Boni’s opinion. He also stated that there should be some latitude, especially when there are fewer members of the public in attendance. Commissioner Boorman stated that he does not understand why this was brought forward as it has been discussed several times and there has not been a problem with public participation at any of the meetings. He stated that it is important to maintain an open stance to people who attend meetings to participate or who participate by sending emails or other communications to the Commission and it is important to not send a negative message to those who wish to participate. He stated that the Commission has taken the stance by consensus that where there is no problem; let’s not create one, and noted that Commissioners Boni and Briggaman are implying that they wish to put forward a motion to limit participation to three minutes but yet are also saying that the Chair should have some latitude. Commissioner Boorman stated that he finds it perplexing that the Commissioners want to put forth a three-minute limitation yet recognize the fact that it is not a big deal if speakers go over the three minutes to some degree, especially since the Commission has not experienced a problem with public participation. Commissioner Boni responded that just because the Commission has never had a problem it does not mean that there will not be a problem in the future and again stated that there should be a three minute limit with the Chair asking the speaker to summarize once the three minutes have passed. He stated that other committees have limits. Commissioner

Boorman asked whether a speaker who has reached the three minutes will be cut off after being asked to summarize. Commissioner Boni stated that the public can speak at the beginning and at the end of the meeting or can speak at the next meeting. He stated that he has yet to see anyone not be able to get his or her point across in three minutes or not be able to summarize when asked to do so. Commissioner Boorman stated that he does not like the image that a time limit sends. Commissioner Briggaman noted that there has been a precedent set by the Town Council and Board of Education and there must be some reason as to why those bodies established limits. Commissioner Boorman replied that if there are reasons as to why other bodies have chosen to have time limits then the Commission should learn those reasons prior to making a motion. Commissioner Briggaman stated that the reason is to ensure that the meetings are run in a timely manner and to prevent public participants from going on and on. Commissioner Nafis stated that he is not in favor of establishing a hard limit on public participation and noted that if the TPZ has a limit he has never seen it enforced. He stated that he would understand having a limit if there were twenty speakers at each meeting and each wanted to speak for five or ten minutes and stated that if it does become an issue in the future it can be addressed at that time. Commissioner Bafundo stated that she got the rules confused in a couple of statements she made at the previous meeting and apologized for the confusion. She stated that there was a time limit at the Commission's public hearing due to the volume of speakers and stated that she has seen the time limit utilized at TPZ meetings. She stated that the reason that the Board of Education and Council set public participation limits is to prevent filibustering which had been a problem in the past. Commissioner Bafundo stated that the Commission does not have the volume of speakers but it does have public participation, emails and phone calls. She stated that she does not see a reason at this point to support a time limit. She stated, however, that it would not be inappropriate to ask a speaker to summarize their comments after three minutes. Commissioner Bafundo stated that the issue can be revisited at a later time if needed. She stated in regards to emails that single page emails can be read in their entirety but longer emails should be summarized. Commissioner Boorman concurred with Commissioner Bafundo. He stated that it sends the right message and it reserves the Chair's ability to ask speakers to summarize. Commissioner Bafundo stated that the Commission does reserve the right to revisit the issue if it becomes problematic but for now she will keep an eye on the time and will go with the three minute warning if needed. Commissioner Boni asked why the Commission should wait, if there is going to be a limit at some point it should just be done now. Commissioner Bafundo stated that the Commission seems to have a consensus that as speakers speak they will be given a warning at the three minute mark and asked to summarize. The Commission agreed by consensus.

Commissioner Briggaman inquired about the reading of emails at meetings. He stated that there are several options for handling emails:

- Post emails on the Town's website, if possible, and not read into the public record
- Post emails on the Town's website and read into the public record
- Read emails into the public record subject to a specific time limit
- The person submitting the email could request that the email be read into the public record in which case the Commission would be obligated to do so.
- Paraphrase any email longer than one page

Commissioner Boorman stated that the Commission should treat emails as Commissioner Bafundo outlined in the previous issue and it should meet its obligation to put public communication out for the people to hear. He stated that if there is an issue with one particular email on any given night that email can be summarized. He questioned whether there needs to be a hard, fast rule that may not be enforced anyway. Commissioner Briggaman replied that he is just stating a number of options and noted that he would like to see emails posted on the web for public viewing. Commissioner Nafis stated that not everyone has access to the web; therefore emails would have to be read into the record as well. He agreed that longer emails should be paraphrased. Commissioner Bafundo retracted her statement from the previous meeting and stated that as Chair she does not have the authority to be able to say yes or no about reading emails into the record, and apologized for making those statements. Commissioner Boorman stated that he appreciates Commissioner Bafundo's comment. Commissioner Bafundo stated that the Chair has that role in other bodies that she chairs, but she does not have that roll as Chair of this Commission. She stated that therefore there is not a need for the Attorney's opinion, as requested at the prior meeting. Commissioner Boorman responded that he is not looking for the Attorney's opinion at this

point. He stated that the Commission has a task to do and while it has a lot of commonality there are going to be disagreements on some things; there is nothing wrong with that, and it is not personal.

#### D Boards of Parks and Recreation

Board of Parks and Recreation members Jeff Hedberg, Chair, and Don Woods came forward to speak about the Charter as it relates to the Board of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Woods stated that he was on the Board during the hiring of Wendy Rubin, and it was the *only time he can recall the Board being split on an issue*. He stated that it boiled down to the words “hiring in concurrence with the Town Manager”. He stated that the Board eventually came to a conclusion and it worked out for the best, but stated that he does not know if the word “concurrence” is necessary as the Board does not necessarily have to concur, it just needs to be able to have input. Mr. Woods stated that the Board would feel comfortable with Charter language that states that the Board has a certain number of seats for the interview process. Mr. Hedberg stated that the Board would like to simplify the Charter and that while various commissions generally have input into hiring it does not necessarily need to be in the Charter. He stated that the Library Board is the only other Board that has a say in hiring. Neal Forte, Vice Chair of the Board of Parks and Recreation, joined the meeting. Mr. Woods stated that he never understood why the Board would have to concur in the hiring of the Parks and Recreation Superintendent but would not have any say in any other personnel matters such as reviews or discipline. He stated that the opinion brought forth during the previous Charter revision was that the work of the Parks and Recreation Superintendent was so intertwined with the Board that it would be a good idea if the Board concurred with the hiring of the Superintendent. He stated that as long as the Board has a part in the process it does not necessarily need to concur with the Town Manager on the hiring. Mr. Forte stated that the Board would need to be a part of the interview process and while it may make recommendations it is still up to the Town Manager to hire the individual since the Town Manager also has the authority to fire the individual.

Commissioner Briggaman noted that a number of past speakers have addressed the issue that as an eleven member Board the Board of Parks and Recreation may have too many members, and asked for the pros and cons of an eleven-member Board as opposed to a smaller Board. Mr. Forte replied that the Board does a lot of things throughout the year and not every Board member can be available for all of those things. He stated that the Board is expanding the Extravaganza this year which requires more of the Board members' time. Mr. Forte stated that the eleven members put in equal amounts of time throughout the year and eleven members are needed to accomplish what needs to be done throughout the year. Mr. Hedberg stated that there may be a need to shrink the number of members on certain boards and commissions that do not always make their quorums, but that there is a lot of work to be done on the Board of Parks and Recreation and everyone on the Board is already involved in the community. He stated that the members are needed to serve on subcommittees and to work on all of the various projects. He stated that he would not want to shrink the Board of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Woods stated that there has not been a problem with filling the eleven slots on the Board as it is a very enjoyable, non partisan Board to serve on. He stated that eleven is a good number for the Board.

Commissioner Bafundo noted that the Board has an active role in hiring the Superintendent and asked whether the Board has any role in evaluations. Mr. Hedberg replied that the Board does not have any role in the evaluations. Commissioner Bafundo asked whether the Board has ever had any input into evaluations in the past. Mr. Woods replied that to the best of his knowledge the Board has not had any input into any non-hiring personnel matter.

Commissioner Briggaman asked how many active and passive fields exist in the Town and asked how that number compares to area towns. Mr. Forte replied listed some of the various fields and noted two or three farms that have very passive fields but stated that Ms. Ruben could provide a better answer. He stated that there are a large number of children playing various sports and the Town does not have enough fields to accommodate all of the kids. Mr. Hedberg stated that this time of the year there is lacrosse, soccer and baseball among other things, and even if there are enough fields the weather plays a big role in field usage and especially this time of year some of the fields become unusable for a period of time due to weather issues. He stated that the Board is studying synthetic turf fields that can be used constantly regardless of rain. Mr. Forte stated that the different age groups require different size fields. Mr. Woods added that in addition to sports there are volunteer groups that use the fields for various purposes, and overall there is quite a bit of activity on all of the fields.



Commissioner Briggaman asked the Board members for their opinion on the possible purchase of the land at the top of Cedar Mountain for open space. Mr. Hedberg stated that it would not fall under the purview of the Board of Parks and Recreation; it would likely fall under the purview of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Forte stated that if the Town ends up with the property it is likely that Parks and Recreation would have a part in taking care of it, which would become a budgetary issue.

## **VII ANY OTHER BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Bafundo asked whether the Commission had received the color version of the mock ups provided by Attorney Clark. Commissioner Boorman stated that it was included in the packet, and stated that he assumed that the mockup was prepared by Attorney Clark as it does not contain a cover. Commissioner Bafundo stated that she does not have a copy. Commissioner Boorman stated that he is finding it difficult to read the document and stated that the idea was to have the document available in Word format so the Commission could use it when it comes time to make some of the language changes. He stated that the code does not make sense to him, and requested that the Attorney come before the Commission to give an explanation of the code.

Ms. Amodeo stated that she is still working on inviting speakers to come before the Commission and she is trying her best to make the agenda of speakers balanced. Commissioner Boorman noted that the Commission is awaiting input from Town Planner Meehan, the Fire Marshall and the Board of Fire Commissioners and stated that while it is not a matter of time it is important to maintain a log of what is due to the Commission.

Commissioner Boni noted that the Commission's next scheduled meeting (April 24, 2008) occurs during school vacation week and asked whether it makes sense to postpone the meeting to the following week – May, 1 2008. Commissioner Bafundo noted that she will be unable to attend the next meeting as she will be out of state. Ms. Amodeo stated that there are no scheduled speakers for the next scheduled meeting. Commissioner Boorman suggested canceling the April 24, 2008 meeting and resuming the normal meeting schedule on May 8, 2008. The Commission agreed by consensus.

## **VIII WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC - none**

## **IX PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Michael J. Fox, 1901 Main Street: Mr. Fox agreed with the decision not to formally limit public participation to three minutes, noting that Councilor Cohen, at the Commission's invitation, took a lot more than three minutes for her presentation and it was to the advantage of the Commission. He stated that Councilor Cohen may bring just as much useful information as a public speaker at the next meeting. Mr. Fox noted Councilor Bottalico's comment about a conflict in having the same person serve as both Fire Chief and Fire Marshall. Mr. Fox stated that the conflict is not in the paid versus the voluntary positions, as a number of Town employees are members of the Fire Department. He stated that the conflict lies in that one of the responsibilities of the Fire Marshall is inspections. He explained that when a Fire Marshall inspects a scene that may have involved, for example, a fatality, and in his report he finds something amiss in the Fire Department's handling of the situation there may be a conflict in that report because it may involve criticizing the Fire Chief. Mr. Fox also spoke about the Board of Fire Commissioners. He noted Commissioner Boorman's previous comments that one of the functions of the Board is to act as the last step in personnel matters. Mr. Fox commented that decisions about a personnel issue should be made based on what the decision maker knows about the Fire Department, and expressed concern that the Town Manager or whoever is assigned to make such decisions would be able to do so. He stated that the Board of Fire Commissioners knows the Department and can make intelligent decisions on the issues. Mr. Fox also spoke about the idea of creating a memorial in Town to all veterans who have served. He stated that while this is not necessarily the Commission's purview, he is unsure whether this would have to be done by ordinance or by Charter revision. He stated that he would like to see a Veteran's Commission in Town. Mr. Fox noted that there are two major veteran's organizations in the area, the VFW and the American Legion. He stated that the Veteran's Commission could be responsible for the Memorial Day parade and other activities and also advocate for Town veterans. He stated that this year's Memorial Day parade will be held on May 24. Commissioner Boorman asked if any area

towns have Veteran's Commissions. Mr. Fox replied that there are Commissions in New Britain and West Hartford and noted that he will get more information at the upcoming VFW meeting in West Hartford.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons agreed that there should not be a time limit for public participation. She noted that she has attended the meetings of several different boards and commissions and noted that there is very little, if any, public participation at these meetings unless there is a controversial issue. She stated that she has watched some meetings from her home and has had incidences where she has tried to go to an in-progress meeting and been locked out of the Town Hall. She stated that if someone takes the time to attend the meetings they should be heard and any speakers that go on and on could be cut off. Ms. Lyons also noted that while watching various meetings on television she has noticed body language, notes being passed and members talking to each other while others are trying to speak. She stated that she finds this disturbing and that there should be more respect amongst the peers at the table.

**X COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS – none**

**XI ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Boorman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm. Motion seconded by Commissioner Boni.

Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan  
Clerk – Charter Revision Commission